

From: Caveman
To: Microsoft ATR
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Subject: Microsoft Anti-trust Case

As a long time computer user, and now, a software quality engineer at the Checkfree Corp, I would like to give a few thoughts on what judgements should be given to Microsoft in the Anti-trust settlement and the technical elements of such a settlement.

First, I believe it is important for Microsoft to remain intact, as one company. Microsoft has been an industry leader, and it would not benefit the computer industry, or Microsoft's ability to deliver its product, by breaking up the company.

Next, it is very important that Microsoft be reigned in with regards to its licensing and fees policies that currently are in place. Because of its sheer size and familiarity in the marketplace, Microsoft has been able to provide computer makers with deep discount prices on their software, but then they turn around and make end-users pay very high fees for access to the software. This creates a problem, because for the computer makers who do not have much of an interest in how their customers actually use the computer, so in almost all cases they will pick the cheapest operating software to package with their computer so that the customer can use the hardware that they make. Because Microsoft's software is therefore so well distributed, the end user is forced into a relationship where the middleman (the computer manufacturers) get what they want, Microsoft gets what they want (high licencing fees), but the end user doesn't get what they want (effective product support and low costs). Because there are really two products involved, software and hardware, a lack of accountability is also introduced since Microsoft can blame the hardware companies, and the hardware companies can blame Microsoft when something is defective for the end user. And the end user has no recourse to determine the exact party at fault, because they need to pay ridiculously high licensing costs to Microsoft to determine how the software code is using the hardware. Think of the Firestone/Ford Explorer tire blame game that is still going on, which hasn't benefitted the consumer at all.

Lastly, I believe that an Operating System, such as Microsoft's recently release WindowsXP need only to provide the necessary protocols and low level functions to run the computer hardware. All other software that Microsoft packages with their current operating systems software is superfluous. OfficeXP, Outlook, Internet Explorer, etc. all have been woven so closely with the Operating System software so as to close out other software companies attempting to build equivalent alternatives. This is not needed. I have no problem with Microsoft developing protocols to run extra software packages such as these more efficiently than their competitors software, but to exclude access to

these operating system protocols so that a competitor is intentionally hindered in making the most efficient use of the Operating System is wrong. This is an attempt to increase market share _only_ using monopolistic tactics, and does not allow creativity or competition in the marketplace.

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